

**ABSTRACT**

The present invention relates to various data storage systems and methods therefor capable of allowing an authorized user to process various data stored therein and for preventing an unauthorized user from accessing such data. Such a data storage system may include at least one storage member, 5 at least one process member, and at least one guard member. The storage member may be arranged to store the data therein and the process member may operationally be coupled to the storage member and arranged to process the data stored in the storage member. The guard member may operationally be coupled to the storage member and arranged to effect degradation of at least a portion of such data stored in the storage member and/or degradation of at least a portion of such a storage member itself. 10 As will be described below, various guard members of this invention may effect such degradations in many different ways, e.g., magnetically, optically, chemically, mechanically, and the like. Therefore, the data storage systems and methods therefor of the present invention can provide secure means and methods for protecting data from being accessed by unauthorized users.